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THE
SANDALWOOD TRADE

AND
Traders of Polynesia.

1862.

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THE
SANDALWOOD TRADE

AND

Traders of Polynesia.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain."—
JAMES, iv: 1, 2.

HALIFAX, N. S.

JUNE 19, 1862.

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This tract was written for various reasons. It is published partly as an exercise in printing (though the author has printed but a small part of it,) but more especially for the purpose of circulating, in a cheap form, such information concerning the trade and traders in sandal wood, as may enable many to understand more fully the difficulties and dangers of the position which Missionaries occupy in some islands of the Western Pacific, and of leading them to sympathise more deeply with the dark-minded and cruel, but misguided and much abused savages of Polynesia.

The writer, too, gladly embraces this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging his obligations to the Y. M. C. Association of Halifax, for access to their valuable library, through the politeness of their Secretary, Mr James Farquhar, and that apart from any pecuniary consideration.

As will be apparent on a perusal of this tract, the largest and most important amount of the information which it contains, has been derived from the Journal of John Elphinstone Erskine, Capt. R. N.—now Admiral Erskine. I have also been indebted to the Journals of Rev. J. Williams, and to the “Gems from the Coral Islands.”

Halifax, June 19th, 1862.

JAMES D. GORDON.

THE TRADE AND TRADERS IN SANDALWOOD.

Of the numerous islands of the vast Pacific, the New Hebrides group—extending from north to south about 400 miles—is the one in which the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of B. N. A. is the most deeply interested. The northern part of this group was discovered by Quiros in 1606. In 1768 the group was visited by M. de Bongainville and called by him the Great Cyclades. Their present name was given them by Captain Cook in 1774.

Of the southernmost islands, composing a part of this extensive archipelago, Aneiteum, Tana and Erromango, are those to which our Church is the most closely related, and in which she must needs ever feel an undying interest. In two of these islands, in particular; viz:—Tana and Erromango—the trade in sandalwood has proved most detrimental, not merely to the extension of the Gospel, but also to the furtherance of civilization. But the day of the Lord alone will disclose to the full extent the enormity of the deeds of rapacity and blood, which even now can be directly traced to the avidity, cupidity and wantonness of many, if not of all, who have been, and still are, engaged in this trade in Polynesia.

Sandalwood, so highly prized, sells from £15 to £40 stg. per ton in the China market. In color it is yellow and exceedingly fragrant. The tree is small, and grows upon the least fertile soils; and, sometimes it is said, apparently on the bare coral rock. The Chinese manufacture the wood of this tree—the value of which has been known for at least the last 50 years—into fancy articles, but use the greater part of it in burning incense in their private dwellings and temples.

In 1859 Capt. Erskine heard of 11 vessels—barks, brigs, cutters and schooners—being at that time engaged in this commerce. Of these 7 belonged to Sidney, 3 to Hobartown, and one to Plymouth. He says there were then 200 tons of cleaned sandalwood at the Isle of Pines, which had been collected at Lifu by the *Julia Percy*—Louis. Master—in about 8 months. The vessel carried 65 tons of cleaned wood, and 3 kegs of tobacco of 2 cwt. each, and 3 cases of pipes filled the brig.—The 200 tons cost about £60, and the profit on the whole, allowing it to sell for only £15 per ton, would be £1,182 4s.

Towards the end of the last century, this wood was accidentally discovered in the Fiji Islands. But several vessels coming thither from Manilla and the Australian ports, the demand soon proved greater than the supply. Subsequently the traffic was transferred to the New Hebrides, Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia.

As *Poland* is a synonym for wrong, oppression and violence, so, to many, the mention of *sandalwood* suggests degradation, demoralization and death, each of which received an impetus from the date of the arrival of the first white settlers in the South Sea Islands. Avarice, cupidity, fire and arms, were agents employed by the Prince of darkness in effecting his work and increasing his power. The introduction of weapons of warfare augmented the number of the slain, and the sight of the slain whetted the teeth of the cannibal, and a taste of their flesh and blood increased the ferocity of the savage. We shall now mention a few circumstances connected with the history of some of these islands, as they bring out the character of the traders and the infamy of their trade.

VAGABOND FOREIGNERS.

We may first state that on Islands in different groups, Capt. Erskine and others found vagabond foreigners, who, by mingling with the heathen had learned their ways, and in some instances had become heathenized. In 1840 Capt. Wilkes of the U. S. Exploring Expedition found an Englishman named James Houseman on one of the Fiji Islands. He had attained the distinction of being cup bearer to Tui Drakete, the king. Another of these royal savages had a steward from

Manilla; and in 1850 Lieutenant Pollard saw another engaged in oiling the body of a chief at Somo-Somo.

Charles Pickering, another of these celebrities, was discovered at Viwa by Capt. Erskine. He had heard of him before, for his fame or infamy had reached Australia. Pickering said he wished to make some explanation "for his own and the public satisfaction." One of his accusers was Thakombau the chief, who charged him with stirring up strife between the natives and white residents. He was then living near the Missionaries, and had no fewer than a half-a-dozen in his harem. On pointing out to him his mode of life and thwarting the efforts of the Missionaries,* the Capt. says "the cool impudence of his reply was amusing." He said he was gradually reducing the number of his women, and felt great comfort on getting rid of *a dozen or two*, which would induce him to persevere in his good intentions.

The Rev. J. Williams during his second visit to the Navigator's Islands in 1832, received information of runaway sailors and other Europeans, who, residing among the people did them incalculable mischief. Many he says were convicts from New South Wales, who had escaped in stolen vessels.—The Missionaries told him of a gang, who, subsequent to their settlement on one of the Islands, had come there in a fine schooner, which, after stripping, they scuttled and sank a few yards from the shore.

Some time previous another gang came in a stolen vessel to the Society Islands, who, though kindly treated by the chief, yet plundered his property, and taking a blunderbuss and powder with other things, decamped at night in Mr. Barff's whale boat. When missed, two boats with native crews were despatched in search of them. The pursuers on overtaking them, said:—"Friends, we have come to fetch you back; you must not steal the Missionary's boat and the chief's property." They replied by letting them have the contents of the blunderbuss, which blew the head of one of them to pieces, killed two others, and severely wounded a fourth. A boy alone escaped by jumping into the sea and hiding himself behind the

* The evangelistic efforts of the Wesleyans in this group have been eminently successful.

boat. The others, thinking there were no survivors, sailed off, but the boy and the wounded man afterwards managed to row to the shore.

Mr. Williams says that on his arrival from a voyage, he found several of these men at Raiatea. They represented themselves as being shipwrecked mariners. Though wrecked in 73° north, they got there in *three* weeks. He told them their tale was a foolish fabrication, and was convinced they were convicts. They left next day. On reaching the Navigator's Islands, they entered with savage delight into the wars of the natives, making fearful havoc with their fire-arms.—The leader on one occasion killed 9 men, besides wounding others, with a shot from his blunderbuss. Ere he had time to re-load, however, they rushed upon him and killed him.

A "monster of iniquity," had been put to death previous to Mr. W's. arrival. It was stated he had killed *two hundred* with his own hand. To prevent detection he used to smear himself with charcoal and oil. The heads of the slain used to be ranged before him when taking his meals.

Charles Savage, a Swede, wrecked in 1808, is reported as having been the first who taught the Fijians the use of fire-arms. By one party among the natives his name was mentioned with horror, and by another in terms of admiration. As a warrior he led hostile tribes against other islands. But in March, 1814, in a battle at Viti Levu, he was defeated, together with the master of an English trading vessel from Calcutta. The object of the attack was to secure a cargo of sandalwood. Fourteen of the crew were slain, and eaten, and the body of Savage treated with marks of the utmost indignity. His bones were converted into sail needles and distributed among the people in order to perpetuate the remembrance of his defeat, and their own victory.

MODES OF OBTAINING SANDALWOOD.

We come now to review some of the expedients to which traders resorted in order to procure cargoes of sandalwood. The occurrence last mentioned was brought about by an attempt at procuring the coveted article, and the following outrages were perpetrated, with results as disastrous, while

parties were attempting to obtain sandalwood by means most dishonorable and reprehensible.

In 1834 the master of a French brig called the *l'Amiable Josephine*, assisted a chief of Viwa in a war against Somo-Somo. This Captain—one cannot call him a *man* for he was unworthy of the appellation—was so much of the cannibal that he allowed a man to be cooked and eaten on board of his vessel. Subsequently, however, he together with the most of his crew were massacred at this same place. Four years after this last mentioned event M. d'Urville, for revenge, burnt the village of Viwa. But, if the French acted badly in their intercourse with these savages, Englishmen conducted themselves in a manner no less reprehensible.

“While at the Navigator’s,” says the Rev. J. Williams, “I heard of two vessels having been taken at Islands where the people were still heathen; in the one case all the crew, and in the other the greater part of them, fell victims to the excited feelings of the natives. In both cases Englishmen were the aggressors. In the one, the chief’s son was threatened with death, and in the other the drunken Captain and crew were in the act of dragging the chief’s wife on board their ship. A short time after this disastrous event, a man-of-war visited the island, when sixty of the inhabitants were killed. Surely—Mr. W adds—if the natives are to be so severely punished for avenging their injuries, some method ought to be adopted to prevent our countrymen from inflicting them.”

In 1832 a man-of-war is despatched to one of the Navigator’s Islands, and 60 natives are murdered to avenge the death of two or three drunken Englishmen, who had probably, forfeited their lives!

In 1861 Missionaries are massacred on Eromanga by a *British subject* and unfriendly natives: Commodore Seymour proceeds thither in a man-of-war, takes a look at the island, and then steams off, without even attempting to bring the murderers to an account!

One of the unrighteous expedients to which traders had resource in procuring sandalwood was impressing natives for the purpose of taking it forcibly by making descents upon

other islands. This was one mode—and the price was the price of blood.

“For the credit of the British name,” says Captain E. “and for the sake of her colonies, who are seriously interested in the great question of the civilization of the Pacific, this trade must be placed under the same regulations as ordinarily govern commercial intercourse with foreign countries.”

Captain Erskine—of H. M. S. *Havannah*, who, probably did more good than all who had previously, or who have subsequently visited these islands in a similar capacity—having completed his cruise among the islands, returned to Port Jackson. While there, hearing of an outrage having been committed at the Fijis, he dispatched Lieutenant Pollard in H. M. Schooner *Bramble* to make due investigation. The following is a brief account of the affair:

A Mr. Fitzgerald, an Englishman, was residing at Nakulau in the territory of Riwa. This fellow, in conjunction with a Mr. Williams, U. S. Consular Agent at the same place, had hired from Takonauto, 20 of his slaves to carry on a trepang fishery at the northern end of New Caledonia. Thither the slaves were conveyed in two Sidney vessels. Operations were commenced and conducted “with the usual disregard of the rights of the natives of the Country.” But mark the issue. The natives seized one of the vessels—a cutter—which had on board at the time a New Caledonia Chief, as a hostage, and native women, forcibly taken. The crew was massacred. Fitzgerald, leaving his slaves behind him, with a small stock of ammunition, under the superintendence of an American man of color, escaped to Sidney. Subsequently the French bishop who was at that time making a second attempt at establishing a Mission on New Caledonia, forwarded the remainder of the party to Aneiteum. While on Aneiteum one of the Fijians, whose sanity at the time was doubted, made an attack upon an Englishwoman in the employ of Captain Paddon. The Aneiteumese, falling upon the unhappy Fijian, killed and ate him. The survivors—12 or 13 were afterwards forwarded to Sidney by Paddon.

Of Captain Paddon, Captain E. says that he is one of the most honorable of the sandalwood traders; a dubious compli-

ment. He is about as honorable, I suppose, as a Rumseller: *Primus inter pares*, who are all robbers and murderers.— Who cursed the Chinese with opium? Paddon. Who perpetuated idolatry among them by sending them sandalwood to burn incense to their idols? He did. Who fired upon the natives of Mare? The same. “And Brutus is an honorable man.”

“Captain Paddon and all the traders,” say the Tanese, “tell us that the worship is the cause of all our sickness and death, and they all say that they will not trade with us, and give us plenty of pipes and tobacco, powder, balls and caps, till we kill Missi, (Mr. Paton) and after that they will send a trader to live at his house among us, and give us plenty.”

Previous to engaging in the sandalwood trade he carried on a traffic in opium, in a small brig called the *Brigand*, of which he was master and owner. In the same vessel he commenced the sandalwood trade. In 1843, while searching for this coveted article, a bloody encounter ensued between his crew and the natives of Mare. Seventeen of his crew were killed and several wounded. The number slain on the other side is not mentioned. This was the beginning of his career in these waters. Nothing daunted, he determined to gain a permanent footing on some convenient island. On account of the “anchorage, and the peaceable disposition of the natives” he obtained an amicable settlement on Aneiteum. Since that period he has become one of the sandalwood merchant princes of the Pacific. In justice to Captain Paddon, however, it must be said that it does not appear he wantonly took the lives of natives as some in the same trade have done. In an affidavit made by him in reference to this disastrous affray, he stated before the superintendent of Norfolk Island, that so soon as he had cleared the ship of the assailants “he endeavored to stop the firing for the sake of the people on shore, and (that) thus not more than six musket shots, and no long gun were fired after them.”

Another occurrence which caused much excitement took place at the Isle of Pines, in 1850. Mr. Lewis, the superintendent of Mr. Towns, was employed in collecting wood on Mare, in the cutter *Will-o'-the-Wisp*. On being informed

that the people of a district to the southward—where were *rival traders*—had formed a plan for capturing his vessel, he armed his men and proceeded to the spot. Alas! three unsuspecting natives, armed with their clubs, as was their custom, on swimming off were shot. This deed done, Lewis, chuckling very likely over his prowess, immediately sailed off. But, for the murder of these inoffensive men he was afterwards brought to trial in a Court of Justice (?) in New South Wales. The Chief Justice made a strong charge, but there was no redress for savages. The Jury acquitted the ignoble assassin. Subsequently, in retaliation, Towns had a cutter captured, and his crew cut off at Mare. Saguiary trade! Foreigners may wantonly murder natives with impunity, but let not a savage dare to take the life of a European, under any circumstances.

The sloop-of-war *Falmouth* arrived at Ovolaw, one of the Fijis, in March, 1851. A few months previous John Forster, a Scotchman, and claiming the protection of the U. S. Consular Agent, Mr. Williams, had been killed by natives, in revenge, it was said, for the massacre of some of their number by Thakanauto. The man who struck the fatal blow was tried by a court of six officers of the *Falmouth*, found guilty and executed. Williams was prosecutor, and Mr. Calvert, Missionary, interpreter and counsel for the prisoner. Mr. C. expressed his conviction that the proceedings were conducted with great care and deliberation, and an evident desire to save the man's life, had justice permitted.

Hitherto, however, it does not appear that a savage ever got any redress in a British Court. Captain Erskine removed Stevens from Tana. "I was desirous," he says, "of showing to the vagrant English, who, when among these islands, fancy themselves above all restraint, that offences wantonly committed here were punishable by our own laws; and altho' in this case it was not probable that any evidence could be procured which would weigh with a Sidney Jury, even in the doubtful case of their considering the murder of a savage a blamable action, yet the inconvenience the culprit would be put to by his removal might operate in some degree as a check

upon others, if it were understood that our domiciliary visits were to be annually repeated."

The cruise of Captain Erskine among these islands was made in the year 1849 and 1850. On one occasion he says he had a long conversation with a Mr. Rodd, superintendent of Paddon's establishment, and adds, "the principal topic was, of course, the state of the sandalwood trade, and the history of the many affrays which had occurred between the natives and the crews of the vessels." In one of these Rodd had lost an eye and a hand, and very nearly, his life. He became acquainted with these islands in 1840, at which period he was on board the brig Camden, in the service of the London Missionary Society. He was present when the first Samoan teachers were landed on the isle of Pines. A seaman on board the Camden, detected two or three billets of sandalwood in a supply brought off for the vessel. He was aware of its commercial value, and concealed his knowledge from the rest of the crew. On reaching Sidney he showed the billets, which he had carefully preserved, to some merchants of that place. His secrecy was purchased, and two vessels were immediately dispatched to the island, which it was said made profitable voyages to China. That this island produced the precious commodity was soon no longer a secret. Vessels flocked thither. The usual feuds ensued which issued in the greater demoralization of the heathen and in the death of several. The brig Star, in 1840, of Tahiti, was seized by 30 natives, and the crew, together with some Samoan teachers, were murdered and afterwards eaten.

On arriving at Tana, Captain E., sent a boat ashore to reconnoitre. On returning, the crew brought with them the superintendent of a sandalwood establishment, Leonard Cory, an Englishman. At that time the relations between the natives and Europeans were of a friendly character. Cory had property there to the value of £600. He received in exchange for his articles, wood and pigs. The pigs were shipped to Eromanga, and given for sandalwood. His testimony was that during the period he had been there, 10 months, he had not had anything stolen from him. His stock consisted of rod and bar iron, axes, muskets, powder,

tobacco and blue beads. Foreigners have made the poor Tanese "two-fold more the children of hell than themselves." Under date Oct. 11th, 1861, Rev Mr. Patton writes thus :—

"Perhaps he durst not come ashore, * * * Capt. Anderson had a quarrel with the natives of Wagusi, and he told me his mate shot a man for stealing a musket; but two Tana women on board his vessel informed our people that he had stolen them, the two women who were sent to trade with his boat, and when their friends offered to rescue them they shot two men, and kept firing at the others till they were out of reach. One of the men who was shot and cut to pieces by the axes of the Captain's (Murray) men, in his boat was a chief sitting as a hostage while his people were trading.— When the Belgium gentlemen were here, a Hobartown whaler called here, had a white woman on board, and purchased and took away three Tana women, and decoyed 12 young men to sleep on board all night, who found themselves far out at sea next morning."

On Tana at that time, the forces of Kaiassi, a chief, were led to battle by an Englishman named Stephens. Stephens had a musket, and knew how to use it. "The conduct of these reckless men," says Capt. Erskine, "and of the undisciplined crews of vessels, who, always permitted to carry arms, cannot be restricted in the use of them, has rendered, in many cases, the trade in sandalwood * * * little better than plundering expeditions carried on with extreme distrust on either side, and accompanied with no inconsiderable loss of life."

The narrative of Jackson, who during a period extending over ten years, had a temporary residence on different islands, is quite interesting, and parts of it thrilling. His perils and exploits, however, cannot be narrated in this tract; nor can anything be said about a notorious character, generally known by the significant title "Cannibal Charley." But ere closing this brief account of the trade and traders in sandalwood, mention should be made of

EROMANGA'S WRONGS.

These, for the most part, still remain unredressed. This

island, perhaps more than any other, has suffered from the outrages of Europeans, and experienced the evil results of the accursed trade in sandalwood. The first white man, probably, the Eromangans ever saw, left their shores, leaving a most unfavorable impression behind him. This was Capt. Cook. He called there in 1774. While looking for a suitable landing place, he kept off about a mile from the shore. The natives kept making signals for them to come nearer.— On approaching, and handing them a few presents, they were eagerly received. They wished to take his boat to land for him, over the breakers, but he refused their offer. Then they directed the “papalangi”—heavenly foreigners—to go round to a more convenient landing place. At this interview he received from them a green branch. As directed he went round to the spot pointed out, and landed, bearing in his hand the branch, to indicate his peaceful intentions. He says they received him with great courtesy and politeness, and that they gave him yams, cocoa-nuts and water. He observed one influential personage exerting himself in preserving decorum among the natives assembled. The Captain, after spending some time on shore, suspected he saw signs of mischief, and returned to his boat. When about embarking, some of them took up a board used as a gang-way, with the intention, as he thought, of stealing it,—but may they not have done so on account of their unwillingness to part with the “papalangi?”—and they took also two oars out of the hands of the crew.— Cook presented a musket. The board was returned; but they then attempted to detain the boat, and began to haul it ashore. The Captain took aim at the ringleader, but his gun missed fire. The natives threw stones and darts. Cook orders a general discharge to be fired. It is done, and the natives are in confusion. A second volley and *four* are stretched on the beach. The rest escape for their lives. Well, as if the dead and the dying were too few, while sailing away, the oars were held up to his view on a rocky point, and “I was prevailed on” he adds “to fire a 4 pound shot at them, to let them see the effect of our great guns!” This shot frightened them so much, that they retreated into the interior of the island, leaving the oars behind them, and were seen no more. This most

unhappy affray tarnishes the glory, if it does not diminish the renown of this great navigator. How few or how many of the tragic scenes since enacted on that island, may be fairly traced to that sad event, we know not. The day will declare it.—That Williams's murder may be traced to it, we doubt not. What marvel that the blind savages should resolve to put to death every white man who should visit their shores? The Lord, however, in Capt. Cook's case, made good his own declaration, Gen. ix., 6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," for 5 years afterward, he lost his life in a quarrel with the natives of one of the Sandwich Islands.

Whatever may have been the character of the Eromangans when visited by Capt. Cook, at the time of Capt. Erskine's cruise among these islands they were "considered the most barbarous of the New Hebrides." From a Captain Richards he received some information respecting the manner in which the sandalwood trade was carried on with these people. He said the mate of a Sidney vessel had but a few weeks previously boasted to him, that he had shot six men while sailing along the coast. Here then, were six inoffensive natives shot, and for what purpose? *To spoil the trade on a rival.* Another miscreant, for sport for himself, shot a friendly chief.

In addition to these outrages, natives of this island and of other islands had been impressed at different times, and forcibly taken away to collect sandalwood on other islands.—Methuselah Tae, chief of Tonga, gave the following account of a transaction of this kind. His account was borne out by the testimony of others.

About December 1842, two vessels under British colors arrived at Tonga. They came to raise a party of men to cut wood forcibly on the New Hebrides. A brother of the kings agreed with Henry, the leader, to supply 60 men. When ready they embarked in three vessels. On their way they touched at the Fijis to get reinforcements. Thence they proceeded to Eromanga. Having armed themselves with muskets they landed, and commenced to cut wood. Soon some of their axes were missing and a Tongan shot a suspected man. The fire was returned, and a Tongan fell. Leaving the island after this feud, they next made a descent upon Vate,

and with similar results. The Vateans felt the inferiority of their own arms inasmuch as they lost in an affray 26 men, but the enemy none. They fled to a cave. The enemy pursued and fired into it. Was that revenge enough? No: they then pulled down houses, piled the materials at the mouth of the cave, set the pile on fire, and suffocated the wretched prisoners. Have not such sores festered in the dark, diseased souls of these benighted heathen? Time slowly heals wounds like these. Then, again, they were kept cutting wood some days longer than had been stipulated. Four Eromangans were with them, when they returned to Tonga, and small would be their prospect of ever having an opportunity of returning to their native land.

Eighty and eight years have glided away since Captain Cook's visit to Eromanga, and since that period its history has been written in blood and tears. Sandalwood on different occasions was taken from that island, literally besmeared with the blood of its inhabitants. Thirty three years have elapsed since traders began to go there for wood, and they were determined to get it even at the price of blood. These are specimens of the deeds of darkness and violence committed by foreigners destitute alike of the fear of God and of the generous impulses of humanity. The gospel alone can erase the impressions left on the mind of the savage by ungodly men. It alone can soothe his irritated feelings, and calm his angry passions. It alone will be a redress for every wrong. But, what of those who have already gone down to cheerless, hopeless tombs, unblest, unsaved, and with a keen sense of their wrongs and oppressions rankling in their lacerated souls? Alas! there is naught of good in unavailing regrets. The poor savage! Tho' unable to discriminate between the precious and the vile, or to appreciate aright the favor of the good, he knew what it was to writhe under the lash of oppression and violence. But they have thrust away the hands which were endeavoring to pour into their wounded spirits the healing balm. The thirsty ground has drunk alike native and foreign blood; and now in the land of silence mingles dust dear to God and the ashes of the unblest savage. Let us hasten to make the best reparation in our power for

injuries we have not done. The slain are now beyond the reach of mercy's voice, or affection's kind solicitude. At the living, then, live Christians, grasp, and strive to snatch them from the jaws of the gaping lion, and the yawning mouth of hell. 'Tis alarming to think of the un-numbered hosts who have perished without vision. Not one cheering ray ever gleams through the gloom of the impassable gulf; and the shadow of that impenetrable darkness in which they lie enshrouded remains for ever unpierced by the beams of hope.

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